

# Seattle Municipal Code

*Title 23 - LAND USE CODE*

*Subtitle III Land Use Regulations*

*Division 2 Authorized Uses and Development Standards*

*Chapter 23.44 - Residential, Single-Family*

*Subchapter I Principal Uses Permitted Outright*

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## **SMC 23.44.014 Yards.**

Yards are required for every lot in a single-family residential zone. A yard which is larger than the minimum size may be provided.

### **A. Front Yards.**

1. The front yard shall be either the average of the front yards of the single-family structures on either side or twenty (20) feet, whichever is less.

2. On any lot where the natural gradient or slope, as measured from the front line of the lot for a distance of sixty (60) feet or the full depth of the lot, whichever is less, is in excess of thirty-five (35) percent, the required front yard shall be either twenty (20) feet less one (1) foot for each one (1) percent of gradient or slope in excess of thirty-five (35) percent or the average of the front yards on either side, whichever is less.

3. In the case of a through lot, each yard abutting a street, except a side yard, shall be a front yard. Rear yard requirements shall not apply to the lot.

4. A larger yard may be required in order to meet the provisions of Section 23.53.015, Improvement requirements for existing streets in residential and commercial zones.

### **B. Rear Yards.** The rear yard shall be twenty-five (25) feet.

The minimum required rear yard for a lot having a depth of less than one hundred twenty-five (125) feet shall be twenty (20) percent of the lot depth and in no case less than ten (10) feet.

When the required rear yard abuts upon an alley along a lot line, the centerline of the alley between the side lot lines extended shall be assumed to be a lot line for purposes of the provision of rear yard and the determination of lot depth; provided, that at no point shall the principal structure be closer than five (5) feet to the alley.

When a lot in any single-family zone abuts at the rear lot line upon a public park, playground or open water, not less than fifty (50) feet in width, the rear yard need not exceed the depth of twenty (20) feet.

### **C. Side Yards.** The side yard shall be five (5) feet except as follows:

1. In the case of a reversed corner lot, the key lot of which is in a single-family zone, the width of the side yard on the street side of the reversed corner lot shall be not less than ten (10) feet.

2. When the side yard of a lot borders on an alley, a single-family structure may be located in the required side yard, provided that no portion of the structure may cross the side lot line.

**D. Exceptions from Standard Yard Requirements.** No structure shall be placed in a required yard except pursuant to the following subsections:

1. **Garages.** Garages may be located in required yards subject to the standards of 23.44.016.

2. **Certain Accessory Structures.** Any accessory structure may be constructed in a side yard which abuts the rear or side yard of another lot, or in that portion of the rear yard of a reversed corner lot within five (5) feet of the key lot and not abutting the front yard of the key lot, upon recording with the King County Department of Records and Elections an agreement to this effect between the owners of record of the abutting properties. Garages may be located in that portion of a side yard which is either within thirty-five (35) feet of the centerline of an alley or within twenty-five (25) feet of any rear lot line which is not an alley lot line, without providing an agreement as provided in Section 23.44.016.

3. A single-family structure may extend into one (1) side yard if an easement is provided along the side or rear lot line of the abutting lot, sufficient to leave a ten (10) foot separation between that structure and any principal or accessory structures on the abutting lot. Features and projections such as porches, eaves, and chimneys shall be permitted in the ten (10) foot separation area as if the property line were five (5) feet from the wall of the house on the dominant lot, provided that no portion of either principal structure including eaves shall cross the actual property line. The easement shall be recorded with the King County Department of Records and Elections. The easement shall provide access for normal maintenance activities to the principal structure on the lot with less than the required side yard.

4. **Certain Additions.** Certain additions may extend into a required yard when the existing single-family structure is already nonconforming with respect to that yard. The presently nonconforming portion must be at least sixty (60) percent of the total width of the respective facade of the structure prior to the addition. The line formed by the nonconforming wall of the structure shall be the limit to which any additions may be built, except as described below. They may extend up to the height limit and may include basement additions. New additions to the nonconforming wall or walls shall comply with the following requirements (Exhibit 23.44.014 A :

a. **Side Yard.** When the addition is a side wall, the existing wall line may be continued by the addition except that in no case shall the addition be closer than three (3) feet to the side lot line;

b. **Rear Yard.** When the addition is a rear wall, the existing wall line may be continued by the addition except that in no case shall the

addition be closer than twenty (20) feet to the rear lot line or centerline of an alley abutting the rear lot line;

c. Front Yard. When the addition is a front wall, the existing wall line may be continued by the addition except that in no case shall the addition be closer than fifteen (15) feet to the front lot line;

d. When the nonconforming wall of the single-family structure is not parallel or is otherwise irregular, relative to the lot line, then the Director shall determine the limit of the wall extension, except that the wall extension shall not be located closer than specified in subsections D3a-c above.

5. Uncovered Porches or Steps. Uncovered, unenclosed porches or steps may project into any required yard, provided that they are no higher than four (4) feet on average above existing grade, no closer than three (3) feet to any side lot line, no wider than six (6) feet and project no more than six (6) feet into required front or rear yards. The height of porches and steps are to be calculated separately from each other.

6. Special Features of a Structure. Special features of a structure may extend into required yards subject to the following standards only, unless permitted elsewhere in this chapter:

a. External architectural details with no living area, such as chimneys, eaves, cornices and columns, may project no more than eighteen (18) inches into any required yard;

b. Bay windows shall be limited to eight (8) feet in width and may project no more than two (2) feet into a required front, rear, and street side yard;

c. Other projections which include interior space, such as garden windows, may extend no more than eighteen (18) inches into any required yard, starting a minimum of thirty (30) inches above finished floor, and with maximum dimensions of six (6) feet tall and eight (8) feet wide;

d. The combined area of features permitted in subsections D6b and c above may comprise no more than thirty (30) percent of the area of the facade.

7. Covered Unenclosed Decks, Roofs Over Patios and Other Accessory Structures in Rear Yards.

a. Covered, unenclosed decks and roofs over patios, if attached to a principal structure, may extend into the required rear yard, but shall not be within twelve (12) feet of the centerline of any alley, nor within twelve (12) feet of any rear lot line which is not an alley lot line, nor closer than five (5) feet to any accessory structure. The roof over such decks or patios shall not be used as a deck.

8. Access Bridges. Uncovered, unenclosed pedestrian bridges of any height, necessary for access and five (5) feet or less in width, are permitted in required yards except that in side yards an access bridge must be at least three (3) feet from any side lot line.

9. Barrier-free Access. Access facilities for the disabled and elderly meeting Washington State Building Code, Chapter 11 are permitted in any required yards.

10. Freestanding Structures and Bulkheads.

a. Fences, freestanding walls, signs and similar structures six (6) feet or less in height above existing or finished grade, whichever is lower, may be erected in any required yard. The six (6) foot height may be averaged along sloping grade for each six (6) foot long segment of the fence, but in no case may any portion of the fence exceed eight (8) feet. Architectural features may be added to the top of the fence or freestanding wall above the six (6) foot height when the following provisions are met: horizontal architectural feature(s), no more than ten (10) inches high, and separated by a minimum of six (6) inches of open area, measured vertically from the top of the fence, may be permitted when the overall height of all parts of the structure, including post caps, are no more than eight (8) feet high; averaging the eight (8) foot height is not permitted. Structural supports for the horizontal architectural feature(s) may be spaced no closer than three (3) feet on center.

b. The Director may allow variation from the development standards listed in subsection D10a above, according to the following:

(1) No part of the structure may exceed eight (8) feet; and

(2) Any portion of the structure above six (6) feet shall be predominately open, such that there is free circulation of light and air.

c. Bulkheads and retaining walls used to raise grade may be placed in any required yard when limited to six (6) feet in height, measured above existing grade. A guardrail no higher than forty-two (42) inches may be placed on top of a bulkhead or retaining wall existing as of the date of the ordinance codified in this section. If a fence is placed on top of a new bulkhead or retaining wall, the maximum combined height is limited to nine and one-half (9 1/2) feet.

d. Bulkheads and retaining walls used to protect a cut into existing grade may not exceed the minimum height necessary to support the cut or six (6) feet, whichever is greater. When the bulkhead is measured from the low side and it exceeds six (6) feet, an open guardrail of no more than forty-two (42) inches meeting Building Code requirements may be placed on top of the bulkhead or retaining wall. A fence must be set back a minimum of three (3) feet from such a bulkhead or retaining wall.

e. When located in the shoreline setbacks or in view corridors in the Shoreline District as regulated in Chapter 23.60, these structures shall not obscure views protected by Chapter 23.60 and the Director shall determine the permitted height.

11. Decks in Yards. Decks no greater than eighteen (18) inches above existing or finished grade, whichever is lower, may extend into required yards.

12. Heat Pumps. Heat pumps and similar mechanical equipment, not

including incinerators, may be permitted in required yards if the requirements of the Noise Control Ordinance, Chapter 25.08, are not violated. Any heat pump or similar equipment shall not be located within three (3) feet of any lot line.

13. Solar Collectors. Solar collectors may be located in required yards, subject to the provisions of Section 23.44.046.

14. Front Yard Projections for Structures on Lots Thirty (30) Feet or Less in Width. For a structure on a lot which is thirty (30) feet or less in width, portions of the front facade which begin eight (8) feet or more above finished grade may project up to four (4) feet into the required front yard, provided that no portion of the facade, including eaves and gutters, shall be closer than five (5) feet to the front line (Exhibit 23.44.014 B).

15. Front and rear yards may be reduced by twenty-five (25) percent, but no more than five (5) feet, if the site contains a required environmentally critical area buffer or other area of the property which cannot be disturbed pursuant to subsection A of Section 25.09.280 of SMC Chapter 25.09, Regulations for Environmentally Critical Areas.

16. Arbors. Arbors may be permitted in required yards under the following conditions:

a. In any required yard, an arbor may be erected with no more than a forty (40) square foot footprint, measured on a horizontal roof plane inclusive of eaves, to a maximum height of eight (8) feet. Both the sides and the roof of the arbor must be at least fifty (50) percent open, or, if latticework is used, there must be a minimum opening of two (2) inches between crosspieces.

b. In each required yard abutting a street, an arbor over a private pedestrian walkway with no more than a thirty (30) square foot footprint, measured on the horizontal roof plane and inclusive of eaves, may be erected to a maximum height of eight (8) feet. The sides of the arbor shall be at least fifty (50) percent open, or if latticework is used, there must be a minimum opening of two (2) inches between crosspieces.

(Ord. [122823](#), Section 4, 2008; Ord. [122190](#), Section 6, 2006; Ord. [122050](#) Section 6, 2006; Ord. [121476](#) Section 7, 2004; Ord. [120410](#) Section 5, 2001; Ord. [119791](#) Section 6, 1999; Ord. [119239](#) Section 7, 1998; Ord. [118794](#) Section 16, 1997; Ord. [118414](#) Section 8, 1996; Ord. 117263 Section 9, 1994; Ord. 116262 Section 8, 1992; Ord. 115326 Section 4, 1990; Ord. 113883 Section 3, 1988; Ord. 113401 Section 2, 1987; Ord. 112971 Section 4, 1986; Ord. 111390 Section 7, 1983; Ord. 110669 Sections 12(part), 32(part), 1982; Ord. 110381 Section 1(part), 1982.)